

Minutes
Skateboard Park Advisory Committee
November 21, 2005

Committee Members Present: Matthew Johnston, Mike Shaughnessy, Dan Hughes, John Carr, Micah Shapiro, Roxanne Thomas, Scott Shinn

Guests: Keith Strobel, Christian Poules, Dan Barnett, Drake Miller, Seth Holton, Jimmy Levan, Harrison Boyce, Ryan Worcester, Josh Katchaloin

Staff: Susan Golub, Kim Baldwin

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved.

Public Comment – Pre-Meeting

Dan Barnett

Spoke about bike damage at Marginal Way skatepark, where bikes are not welcome, and provided a case against BMX inclusion in skateparks.

Kate Martin

Submitted the following written comments, which were read by Scott:

This project desperately needs to get on track with a logical planning process and a logical public process. Wally talked to Scott Morgan about working with the masterplanning charrette team. Need to schedule that meeting after Scott's vacation.

Public meeting on December 13th needs to be rescheduled. This is a bad time for families. Move meeting to January so that this can be accommodated and also so Wally can meet with planning team.

Lower Woodland dollars will be closely watched by a shadow accountant. Be prepared for an audit. Starting with a logical planning process will likely reap a 40% increase in goods received for dollars spent. If 85,000 sf skateparks are costing \$2 million, then we will easily get our promised 25,000 sf out of this project with just over \$1 Million if we stop wasting money and get this on track.

Don't forget who the average skater is. Don't build a skatepark without a plan for bikes. Skateparks are like pools, roller rinks, or ice rinks. They need attendants. If you don't make a plan for bikes, you will be planned by them. The Citywide Planning Study must completely address bike needs. And climbing.

BMX is a legitimate use and they should not at a general rule share concrete simultaneous use with skaters. However, one at a time use of mutually enjoyable skate features, like isolated half-pipes, etc. should be encouraged. We should have some shared features in every park. These will have to be more durable in construction and perhaps replaced more frequently.

Not providing for BMX and asking them to simultaneously skate the same terrain sets kid up for adversarial situations that results in all but the toughest giving skateboarding up. Please make decisions in favor of all children and put any biases aside.

This is the breakdown I recommend for Lower Woodland square footage:

25,000 sf

12,500 sf Street Skating Area

5,000 sf Bowl Skating Area

2,500 sf Hybrid Terrain Area

2,500 sf Skill Building Area

2,500 sf Shared All Wheels Terrain Area

Additional components that must be included to take this from a skate surface to a skatepark:

Gathering Area Paved

Gathering Area Green

Spectator Amenities

Concessions Pavilion / Monitor Home Base

Art

Wind Block

Shaded area

Water Fountain

Lights

Accessible Maintenance Tools

Marginal Way Skatepark

Dan Barnett provided an update on the Marginal Way skatepark, noting that the builders have received permission from the Washington State Department of Transportation to proceed with construction, and that a number of new skate features have been added to the park recently. Marginal Way will be Seattle's only covered skatepark for the near future.

Skatepark Resolution

John provided an update about the status of the resolution sponsored by Councilmember David Della that was subsequently passed by the City Council to plan a comprehensive network of skateparks, skatespots and integrated skateable terrain throughout the city.

Susan noted that the plan will be based on the Portland process and will have a September 30, 2006 deadline, which is quite aggressive.

Matt suggested creation of a SPAC subcommittee that will begin efforts to identify prospective members for the citywide plan.

Lower Woodland Design Meeting #1 Recap

Dan Hughes summarized the 11/15 meeting, noting that Wally Hollyday made a presentation about skateparks and skatepark design concepts, and that citizens were asked to circle the types of features they preferred for this skatepark. Additional interests were also represented at the meeting, including BMX and rollerskating. Due to the additional issues introduced and the length of the presentation, the meeting felt "truncated."

Kim Baldwin provided an update on the status of the Lower Woodland skatepark project, noting that California Skateparks was originally subcontracted by Wally for landscape architecture services, but subsequently left the project. Instead, Wally will be subcontracting with Purkiss-Rose for landscape architecture services and non-skate related park features, including drainage, paths, utilities and construction documents.

Dan Hughes commented on the history of Purkiss-Rose's attempts to build skateparks in the past, and the skateboarding community's opinions about these efforts, but acknowledged that these types of issues should not matter as long as Wally remains in control of the final skate feature design.

Scott Shinn asked about opportunities for integrating recent work done by volunteer landscape architects into the master plan for this site.

Ms. Baldwin explained the differences between a site plan, a full site plan, and a full master plan, noting examples and showing designs for various parks around Seattle that have been planned according to these levels of specificity. For the Lower Woodland skatepark, which will be built in phases to become a full-service 20,000 to 24,000 square foot skatepark, the scope does not include a full master plan, but simply the addition of an element to an existing park. However, given that citizens are raising money to supplement the efforts of the Parks Department, and that the budget was recently increased from \$600,000 to \$850,000 by the City Council, there is a need to design the whole park, so this project will proceed with a full site plan moving forward.

Mike expressed concerns about roadblocks to construction at Lower Woodland if a full master plan was required, given the phased nature of the design and build process for this skatepark.

Kim provided additional details about the need to examine all features of the site, including pedestrian circulation, maintenance, existing buildings, relationships with the soccer and softball fields, lighting, pavilion areas, future amenities, and the relationship of the site plan to fundraising efforts. The proposed plan looks at the broadest area for skate features and related amenities, and the next public meeting will allow for input regarding site design, when the landscape consultant will be present to gather public input about the site. There will be a total of three public meetings for this skatepark, instead of the two that were originally planned.

Matt asked the SPAC if there was consensus on the issue of broad scope for site design. The SPAC provided unanimous consent to this idea.

Matt expressed concerns regarding budget and resources, noting that the volunteer effort should not be ignored, and that maximizing the volunteer effort in addition to the use of consultants might also offer opportunities to save money. The SPAC provided unanimous support for this idea.

Kim noted that the second public design meeting will occur on December 13 at the Green Lake Library, with doors opening at 5:45 and the meeting starting at 6:00.

Matt suggested that the design consultants should be available via e-mail for additional public input.

Lower Woodland Phase II Grant Project

Scott summarized the project, noting that the goal is to raise \$150,000 to \$200,000 for additional construction at Lower Woodland beyond the Phase I construction, and moved to create a subcommittee that will serve as an interface to the project. Subcommittee members will include Scott, Matt and John,

who are also on the steering committee for the grant project. The first task of the subcommittee will be to request Parks Board action to serve as the Public Entity Co-Applicant for the King County Youth Sports Facilities portion of the grant, with Susan to submit the letter to the board and Scott to provide public comment about it, or to speak about it as an agenda item in a forthcoming meeting.

Christian Poules expressed an interest in participating on the steering committee. Drake Miller suggested sponsorship by Pepsi or Coke. Both will follow up with Scott regarding this.

SeaSk8 Replacement Location

Susan reported that the first meeting of the City team to select a consultant to assess alternative locations will occur on 11/23.

Matt offered to contact Aaron Bert in the Department of Finance regarding the placement of a SPAC member on the City team.

John offered to write a letter on behalf of the SPAC regarding the need to relocate the skatepark at Seattle Center. John will follow up with SPAC members regarding letter drafts and final version.

Mike offered to be a part of the City team and noted that the recent demise of the Monorail might provide opportunities for a skatepark site in previously unavailable locations on the Seattle Center campus.

River City Skatepark

John reported on the recent fundraiser event for River City skatepark and the receipt of a \$10,000 grant from the Tony Hawk Foundation.

Skateboarding/BMX Roundtable Discussion

Seth Holton, Jimmy Levan and Drake Miller joined the SPAC in this discussion on behalf of the BMX community, submitted articles by Mike Valley and SPAUSA in defense of mixed use, and provided samples of plastic-coated BMX pegs.

Matt defined the goals of this discussion: 1) to expose and explain SPAC members' personal issues with bikes in skateparks, 2) to define the user groups for the Lower Woodland skatepark and Seattle skateparks in general, 3) to discuss safe and reasonable standards for skatepark use, 4) to listen to the views of both the skateboarding and BMX communities. The SPAC will write a subsequent recommendation to the Parks Department regarding bikes in skateparks based on the results of this and other discussions with the BMX community. It is important to face the reality that some BMX use will be present in skateparks regardless of the policy, so a pragmatic perspective is also key to successful decisions in this area.

The issues

Scott summarized his issues: 1) damage to concrete from pegs, 2) increased potential for injury to skateboarders in collisions with BMXers due to the heavier weight and metal structure of a bike, 3) increased potential for collisions due to different and sometimes conflicting lines of travel throughout the skatepark by both user groups.

Dan summarized his issues: 1) danger to skateboarders, 2) displacement of skateboarders by BMXers, 3) damage to the skatepark.

John concurred with Scott and Dan, but also expressed concerns about the idea of excluding anyone from a skatepark, and added that practical solutions for fixing BMX damage should be identified.

Micah explained that he has heard arguments for and against mixed use, and that it works in some places and not in others. As a professional skatepark designer, he knows that parks can be designed for mixed use, but also expressed concerns about the fear many skateboarders have of colliding with bikes, especially when there are enough BMXers in a skatepark to displace skateboarders. He added that both groups are underserved.

Roxanne explained that her young son is intimidated when he skates in parks with bikes, and added that designated hours of use could help minimize this, assuming that maintenance and repair issues could be resolved.

Mike concurred with the opinions noted above, and also expressed concerns that it is not fair to exclude any user group from a park, but noted that a mix of skateboarding and BMX does not work, and that the Parks Department should build BMX parks.

Seth explained that there is not enough constituency to advocate for BMX parks, and that the timeframe for building these types of parks is too long. He added that mixed use skateparks exist all over America, and that separate bowls help keep bikes and skateboards separate. Regarding damage to skateparks, he mentioned that BMX pegs can be rubber-coated to minimize damage, or skateparks can adopt a “no peg” policy, or restrict pegs on certain types of surfaces like pool coping. He added that BMX self-monitoring at skateparks also happens regularly, and that older users pass along etiquette to younger ones. He also mentioned that the Boulder, CO skatepark allows bikes until noon, and that skaters and BMXers can work together for more parks.

Jimmy is a professional BMX rider and travels around the world riding a wide variety of parks. He has also been skateboarding since the 1980’s, and mentioned that Louisville, KY is a great example of a successful mixed use park. He added that a restriction on bikes in skateparks is ultimately a civil issue, with BMXers having an equal right to use the park. Additionally, he noted that the materials in professionally-built skateparks are less likely to become damaged from BMX use. He argued that it is better to allow bikes as a matter of policy to reduce tension between user groups, and because bikes will use skateparks regardless of the policy.

Drake concurred with Seth and Jimmy, adding that maintenance costs will be required in any park regardless of the user groups it officially supports, and reaffirming the policy on pegs and the tendency toward self-monitoring by BMX users. In terms of safety, he noted that both proper design and user etiquette are required to minimize collision and injury risk.

On safety

Matt argued that the safety of younger skateboarders is compromised by the presence of BMX in skateparks.

Jimmy responded that mixed use works at the Louisville skatepark, and that bikes have the added feature of brakes, which skateboards do not.

Matt responded that the added weight and metal of the bike makes a BMXer comparatively hazardous to a skateboarder.

Jimmy responded that a bike only weighs 25 pounds, which an older skateboarder could easily equal or exceed.

Dan responded that younger skateboarders are at higher risk of collision due to their inexperience and unfamiliarity with skatepark etiquette, whereas younger BMXers have the bike to protect them.

Drake responded that younger kids should and will use the beginner area, which reduces the risk of collision and injury.

Jimmy added that Louisville designates its respective skill areas using the traditional skiing system, with the green triangle, blue square and black diamond.

John concluded by noting that Dan is made of pure marshmallow, which prevents him from hurting younger park users in collisions.

On damage

Micah argued that skatepark material selection and construction can minimize bike damage, but that skatepark damage in general is worse for skateboarders than for BMXers.

Dan added that damage can be repaired.

Drake noted that 95% of BMXers wouldn't mind a no pegs rule.

Seth added that harder grade steel can be used in coping to minimize bike damage, and that concrete can be allowed to cure and harden longer.

Jimmy concurred that most BMXers would honor a no pegs rule.

Matt concurred that damage is not a huge issue.

On hours of use

Jimmy argued that split sessions create a segregated environment and increase tension between user groups.

Drake would support split sessions if they were the only way to allow BMX in a skatepark, but argued that they are not necessary, adding that users will use the park regardless of the policy.

Scott responded that split sessions would create an inadequate "separate but equal" environment that mixed use either should or should not occur at all hours. He added that construction of appropriate BMX facilities in Seattle's parks would provide a more fundamental solution to the problem than skaters and BMXers arguing and fighting over limited square footage.

John concurred that designated hours are not an appropriate solution.

Mike noted that traditional parks have a dedicated use, such as baseball, basketball or soccer, and that “extreme” sports should be no different, with appropriate facilities available for skateboarding, and appropriate facilities available for BMX.

Drake noted that skateboarders and BMXers use the same features in a skatepark.

Jimmy and Drake reiterated that a split session would be better than no BMX use at all.

Matt noted that skatepark layout should consider bike use regardless of policy to encourage pockets of activity in different areas rather than concentrating activity across a set of overcrowded lines.

Next Steps

Matt noted that the SPAC will write a position paper on mixed skateboarding/BMX use in Seattle skateparks, and encouraged the BMX community to do the same

Public Comment – Post-Meeting

Keith Strobel

Agued against split sessions because they might not work with the schedules of park users, and indicated his preference for no bikes in parks, adding that more facilities for both sports would provide a more fundamental solution.

Harrison Boyce

Argued that young BMXers in skateparks pose the same etiquette problems as young skateboarders, and that a well-designed park helps minimize collision and injury potential.

Josh Katchaloin

Noted the proximity of the existing BMX facility to the proposed skatepark, that it will be difficult to keep the two user groups separate, and that a no bikes policy will create tensions between the groups.

Dan Barnett

Expressed concerns regarding the selection of Purkiss-Rose as the landscaping subcontractor for the Lower Woodland skatepark, and noted the shoddy construction of projects where Purkiss-Rose acted as a skatepark contractor.

Micah responded that Purkiss-Rose will do a fine job for construction documents.

Dan continued, expressing his concerns about bikes in skateparks, and adding that SPAUSA is merely the opinion of one person. He argued that separate facilities are appropriate for these different sports, has personally skated in bike-damaged parks, and concluded by underscoring the immediate need for Seattle to serve its skateboarding population with appropriate, dedicated facilities.

Ryan Worcester

Noted the need for everyone to be open-minded and accepting of others, and that we all just want a place to ride and skate.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.